

LOUISIANA SHRIMP HARVESTER ADVISORY PANEL

MINUTES

January 27, 2010



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4th FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & FISHERIES
2000 QUAIL DRIVE
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Approval of Agenda
- IV. Approval of January 6, 2010 Minutes
- V. Discussion of Use of Modified Beam Trawls
- VI. Discussion of Shrimp Management Opportunities
- VII. Discussion of use of Sodium Tripolyphosphates in Shrimp Processing
- VIII. Discussion of Proposed Settlement of Shrimp Anti-Dumping Orders with Thailand
- IX. Set Next Meeting Date and New Agenda Items
- X. Receive Public Comment
- XI. Adjourn

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF

THE LOUISIANA SHRIMP HARVESTER ADVISORY PANEL

Wednesday, January 27, 2010, 9:30 AM

Martin Bourgeois, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, presiding.

In Attendance:

Ronnie Anderson
Lance Nacio
Clint Guidry
George Barisich

Absences:

Scott St. Pierre
Timmy Truong
Tommy Cheramie
A.J. Fabre
Nicholas Alfonso
Bryan Crawford
Jerome Jones
Pete Gericca
Acy Cooper



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Marty Bourgeois called the meeting to order.

Roll was called and nine absences were noted; therefore, a quorum was not present.

Mr. Bourgeois explained that due to a lack of a quorum, the Panel could not take any official action at the meeting such as approving the agenda, approving meeting minutes or adopting motions but encouraged the group to engage in discussions concerning items listed on the agenda.

Lance Nacio spoke of his interest in experimental permits for new shrimp gear. For instance, new rigs that do not disturb the shrimp through net avoidance or waste shrimp. He spoke about the modified beam trawls and thought it would be beneficial if there were permits to experiment with different types of fishing gears. He feels there is a more efficient way of catching shrimp in shallow waters and to pull the net through the water. He feels that there should be different types of webbing. He stated that skimmer nets often scare shrimp away due to vibrations created by reinforcing framing and cables which lay ahead of the nets and there needs to be additional gear options that they can legally use to more efficiently catch larger white shrimp. He would like to see access eased for fishermen to experiment with new shrimp fishing gear.

Ronnie Anderson stated that fishermen in other states have ideas for beam trawls. He stated that the approved butterfly frame is what is now known as the skimmer net. He said that if there was no experimentation with the butterfly net there would be no skimmer net. Skimmer nets are more useful and the most dominant gear in inshore waters. He stated that we need to find a way to develop a gear type that is easier to pull through the deeper water and more fuel efficient.

Mr. Bourgeois explained that there are statutes concerning experimenting with new gear types. He stated that there should be an evaluation of new fishing gear for unanticipated impacts such as disturbances that the nets could possibly cause to the bottom and to determine if there is an increase in by-catch rates.



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Clint Guidry explained that it should be legal to experiment with gears if there is no law already existing. There needs to be process set up to ease the use of experimental gear and a certain amounts of permits that allow fishermen to experiment with gears. He thinks it would be beneficial if fishermen would collect data and log how many pounds of fish, location, and pounds of shrimp are caught. He stated the need to be more fuel efficient so that fishermen don't go out of business.

Mr. Anderson stated that skimmer nets disturb the bottom less than the previous gear types and would like to get rid of otter doors so less drag is created through the water. Skimmer nets in deeper waters are harder to push through water and he has ideas for nets that can be easily adjusted through different depths of water. Mr. Anderson stated that the problem right now is that it is illegal to use beam trawls with no otter doors.

Mr. Bourgeois explained that the legal definition of a trawl requires doors.

Mr. Guidry explained that offshore shrimpers might not like experimenting in inshore waters.

Mr. Anderson thinks it would be more beneficial if offshore and inshore fishermen can have an experimental license so that there would be more ideas for a better solution of developing new gear.

Mr. Nacio explained that beam trawls are used all over the world and environmental groups favor them because of less bottom damage. Other states generate different designs for beam trawls that are computer generated. He feels that this is a great idea.

George Barisich explained that the problem with the disaster programs is that no one knows they exist and are not advertised properly. Mr. Anderson stated concern about the current program that is in the early stages of being developed was not advertised at the Shrimp Task Force meetings.

Mr. Guidry questioned what is happening with the new fisheries assistance program that is being launched and how much is allocated to the program. He expressed his opinions on how these programs are developed and wants to be notified. He stated that he can't find anything about the program and there is no contact or outreach.

Randy Pausina explained that the Department is currently working with Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA) to get word out to the parishes and to get local advertising about the new program and the parishes are responsible for advertising the meetings.

Mr. Guidry stated that he is on the Louisiana Shrimp Association (LSA) Board of Directors and wants to know ahead of time so he can notify the other fishermen so they can participate in meetings.



Mr. Pausina explained that funding for the program comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through Community Development Block Grants specifically for fisheries and LDWF is trying to reach parishes throughout the state concerning fisheries disaster relief. The LRA determines eligibility and ineligibility of participants and banking will be through the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF). He explained that this funding came from nowhere and is a gift. He stated that HUD has given approval to a general outline of the plan. He also stated that the goal for this program is to develop a full staff capable of rapidly handling future fisheries disaster assistance programs so the fisheries can have long term sustainability. Some ideas are that fishermen can pre-qualify for assistance regardless of the storm and get gear replacement that could be more environmentally friendly. He stated that fishermen would collect data using these gears and provide it to LDWF. Another idea for this money is to help fishermen with bad loans. He added that this program is only in the first phase of development and its goal is to push money to the parishes on a parish level.

Mr. Barisich explained that the problem with hurricane assistance programs is that people that hurt the most financially can't qualify because they couldn't fish after the storms or their boat was damaged and so they don't have proof of trip tickets.

Mr. Guidry explained that Washington wants to see fishermen not just getting money without having strings attached. He stated that small firm grant and loan program is not for fishermen. He wants shrimp prices to be higher and stated that fishermen wouldn't need hurricane assistance if prices were better.

Mr. Pausina stated that different hurricane programs have different requirements and NOAA has stipulations on how money may be used. He also stated that the idea of this new program is to not rely on trip ticket sales but instead rely on proof of loss. The idea is for LRA to work with LDWF to go out and take pictures of damage and get a mechanism so that fishermen can prequalify by showing assets before another storm hits. The problem before was that LDWF didn't have knowledge of how to determine individual losses. LRA is here to help determine loss. He provided copies of upcoming outreach meeting schedules and mentioned that he will be meeting with LSU SeaGrant the next day to begin fleshing out details of program plans.

An audience member commented that fishermen wanted to use hurricane money for creating shrimp processing factories and docks so they would no longer have to deal with imports and processors. Fishermen want to be on their own.

Mr. Pausina added that NOAA restricted using the money for construction purposes.

Mr. Bourgeois opened the floor to discussions on state shrimp management opportunities and provided some background on previous groups who have identified and suggested changes in how the state's shrimp resources are managed. He introduced Mark Schexnayder who then led these discussions.

Mr. Schexnayder suggested that the shrimp task force needs to look at managing tactics. He explained that fishermen need to look at Texas and maybe adopt some changes that would be beneficial for the fishery long term. He talked about the Texas Buy Back Program and how licenses are transferable and that it is strictly voluntary.



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Mr. Guidry explained that he is not for it or against it but it just needs to have further discussion and consideration. His concern is that once the price of shrimp gets better fishermen will get back into the fishing industry.

Mr. Anderson stated that he is against the Buy Back Program but likes the idea of limited entry.

Mr. Bourgeois stated that there are also other ways to look at changes in shrimp management. He asked if fishermen were pleased with the ways seasons are structured and managed or with present regulations such as gear restrictions, the "inside-outside shrimp" line and the "double-rig" line, etc. He also mentioned the minimum count size on white shrimp and its exemption from the minimum size restriction beginning Oct 15 through the third Monday in December of each year and that the minimum possession count may only be enforced onboard a vessel and not at the dock. He explained that in the crab fishery minimum size restrictions may be enforced both onboard the vessel and on the dock or processing plant. Mr. Bourgeois asked that panel if this still makes sense.

Mr. Nacio said that there needs to be a law that both the fisherman and the dock or processor should be held responsible.

Mr. Anderson stated that it doesn't matter how much white shrimp fishermen catch if the price is too low. It is costing more work and fuel cost.

Mr. Schexnayder brought up the idea of decreasing the minimum count of shrimp.

Mr. Anderson stated that if fishermen get the same price for small shrimp as large shrimp it is not beneficial to catch large shrimp. He explained that the problem is not about productivity but price. He also stated that opening the shrimp season in early May might not be a good idea because shrimpers might catch all of the big white shrimp and which won't have time to lay their eggs resulting in reduced abundance during the fall shrimp season.

Mr. Schexnayder stated that there needs to be greater abundance of smaller shrimp if that is the goal.

Mr. Barisich stated that a lot of vessel holders are not fishing due to hurricane destruction and therefore can't get accurate data for catch.

Mr. Nacio wondered why there is not a minimum 100 count shrimp law year round.

Mr. Bourgeois explained that to his understanding shrimp processors promoted legislation exempting white shrimp minimum size during late fall and enforcement only onboard vessels. He added that over the past 5 years brown shrimp landings are declining and white shrimp landings are increasing.

Mr. Nacio wants to have latitude closures and openings. Mr. Bourgeois explained that they have done in the past with mixed results.

Mr. Anderson commented that it seems that once processors examine LDWF's shrimp sampling results shrimp prices drop. Mr. Bourgeois stated that data collected by LDWF is public record and we share this data with anyone upon request.



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Mr. Anderson thinks that LDWF shrimp sampling records should be private not public information.

Mr. Bourgeois stated that Dr. Lucina Lampila with LSU Food Science Dept was unable to attend today's meeting but that she is willing to present information on use of sodium tripolyphosphates in shrimp processing at the February meeting.. Mr. Bourgeois asked if there is anything in particular about tripoly that harvesters wanted Dr. Lampila to present.

Mr. Schexnayder wanted to know how sodium tripolyphosphates are used in the industry and if there are any guidelines in place regarding its uses.

Mr. Nacio wanted to know how sodium tripolyphosphates can be used and abused in the industry.

Mr. Anderson and Mr. Guidry think the problem is not the use of sodium tripolyphosphates but the abuse. They understand that it serves as a preservative.

Mr. Bourgeois asked Mr. Guidry to discuss the proposed settlement of shrimp anti-dumping orders with Thailand.

Mr. Guidry explained that Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) and Thailand need to have a written agreement in order to bring a defense case in court. Mr. Guidry explained that the millions of dollars from the settlement are suppose to go to the fishing industry. The concern is that the shrimpers will not get the money from the settlement and that it will go directly to the processors. Mr. Guidry stated that Thailand pays terrorists for shrimp production and it is the largest imported country under anti-dumping orders. In order to have a review, 85% of the industry has to be represented. As long as one can show dumping is occurring a review can be requested. Mr. Guidry explained that there are deadlines for reviews. There will be a meeting occurring for both sides to present their cases to members of the LSA but both sides won't be present in the room at the same time. There is concern that relief from anti-dumping orders may cause too many shrimp in Thailand's freezer to be imported into the U.S.. Harvesters can't afford an influx in imported shrimp. Mr. Guidry explained that there is a possibility that the money from the settlement could go to the development of processing plants and to the harvesters in the industry.

Mr. Bourgeois asked when the harvesters would like to have their next meeting.

Mr. Guidry stated that the harvesters would like to meet whenever the shrimp task force meets.

Mr. Bourgeois stated that they will find out this afternoon during the Shrimp Task Force meeting and asked if there are any agenda items that harvesters have for the next meeting to email him.

Meeting was adjourned.



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